

About Buffalo Mountain

Buffalo Mountain was part of a large tract of land granted to Revolutionary War hero General Henry “Lighthorse Harry” Lee as a reward for his military service. The property passed on to his sons, Charles Carter Lee and Civil War General Robert E. Lee. Charles Carter Lee built a home near the base of the mountain and his former law office, a small log cabin, still stands on an adjoining piece of land.

This 1,140-acre property was purchased with funds from the 1992 Virginia Parks and Natural Areas Bond and the Virginia Public Building Authority Bond.



Large-leaved grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia grandifolia*)

The Natural Area Preserve System

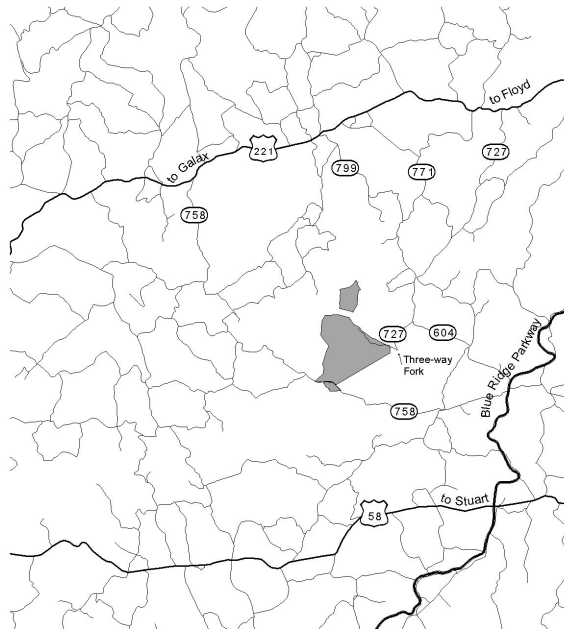
Natural Area Preserves are dedicated to protect habitat for rare and endangered plants, animals, and natural communities. There are 61 Natural Area Preserves protecting more than 55,000 acres statewide. While we provide public access at many preserves, recreation is secondary to resource protection. Preserves are open from sunrise to sunset unless otherwise posted. When you visit any preserve, please follow these guidelines so we can ensure the resources will be here for generations to come.

- No camping
- No fires
- No unleashed pets
- No bicycles, ATVs, or off-road vehicles
- No horses
- No collection of plants, animals, minerals or artifacts

Directions to Buffalo Mountain

From Roanoke, follow I-81 south towards Christiansburg. Exit onto VA 8 and head south towards Floyd. At Floyd, turn right onto US 221, and follow it about 6 miles. Turn left (south) on 727 (Union School Road) and go about 4.5 miles to Conner Grove Road (VA 799). Turn right onto 799, go about 100 feet and turn left onto Moles Road (VA 727). Go about 1 mile, and turn right to stay on VA 727. Go 1 mile to a 3-way fork. Bear to the right and follow the gravel access road to the summit parking area.

From Wytheville, follow I-77 south towards Galax. Merge onto US 221 north towards Hillsville/ Floyd. Follow US 221 about 15 miles to the town of Willis. Turn right onto VA 799 (Conner Grove Road). Follow VA 799 about 5 miles to VA 727. Turn right onto Moles Road (VA 727). Go about 1 mile, and turn right to stay on VA 727. Go 1 mile to a 3-way fork. Bear to the right and follow the gravel access road to the summit parking area.



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http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/

Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve



Buffalo Mountain summit



Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

Natural History

Widely recognized as one of Virginia's greatest natural heritage treasures, Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve is like no other place in the state. A variety of unusual conditions combine to make the preserve home to 12 plant species, two invertebrate species and six natural communities that are rare in Virginia.

At 3,971 feet, Buffalo Mountain's rounded summit stands well above the surrounding landscape and is subjected to sub-alpine winds and temperatures. Slight variations in exposure and soil depth create contrasting microclimates. These variable site conditions, in combination with soils high in magnesium, provide suitable habitat for specialized and unusual vegetation. Much of the summit supports grassy, prairie-like glade communities, which are home to a number of rarities. Among them are mountain sandwort (*Minuartia groenlandica*) and plains frostweed (*Crocianthemum bicknellii*). Also in glades near the top of the mountain, lives an insect found nowhere else on earth – the Buffalo Mountain mealybug (*Puto kosztarabi*).

Along the south and southeast flanks of the mountain are natural openings in the forest with vegetation as intriguing as that on the summit. Each is a glade fringed with eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) and supporting many native grasses. In late summer these glades have dazzling displays of wildflowers. Most impressive are purple blazing-star (*Liatris spicata*) and a seldom seen, brilliant flower called stiff goldenrod (*Solidago rigida* var. *rigida*).

Near the southern base of the mountain, cool groundwater springs to the surface, forming unusual plant communities called mafic woodland seeps. These communities harbor Virginia's largest population of the globally rare large-leaved grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia grandifolia*).

In 2007, a new trail was constructed to the summit of Buffalo Mountain. The summit offers a stunning 360 degree view of the surrounding landscape.

